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“The Albanian Initiative: Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking” 2005 Annual Conference

Tirana—On 11-12 October 2005, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) program, *The Albanian Initiative: Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking (CAAHT)*, convened its first annual conference. The purpose of the conference was to stress the continuation of good practices in the field of anti-trafficking and the improvement of collaboration among civil society, government, and donors.

Ambassador Marcie B. Ries opened the conference yesterday and reaffirmed the US Government’s commitment to fighting trafficking in Albania and across its borders.

Mr. Harry Birnholz, USAID - Albania Mission Director, concluded the conference today by encouraging the participants to continue their important work and not to ignore this moment to fight trafficking in persons in Albania. Birnholz emphasized the need for, “Civil society, government officials, and international donors and organizations to commit together to eliminating trafficking in persons in Albania by ensuring that the mechanisms toward its reduction are in place and self-sustaining.”

Over the two days, conference participants exchanged project achievements, common concerns, future challenges, and next steps for their work in the areas of prevention and awareness, reintegration and victim assistance, coordination and network building, and working with the media. Various stakeholders attending the conference have been preparing remarks and guidance to share with the new government regarding trafficking in Albania. Members of the child anti-trafficking coalition, BKTF (Bashke Kundër Trafikimit të Femijëve), will soon formally advise the government of the key challenges to implementing the National Strategy Against Trafficking in Persons and its corresponding National Action Plan.

During the conference, 18 Albanian NGO leaders and local government officials from CAAHT grant projects and local coordination groups presented models of effective collaborative projects between government and civil society. Together, their efforts are reducing the vulnerability of Albanian children and women to trafficking and helping trafficked children and women restore their lives and regain their sense of dignity.

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CAAHT is a USAID-funded project which aims to combat the trafficking of women and children by reaching Albanian society through activities at national, district, and local community levels. For further information about the CAAHT Annual Conference and CAAHT program, please call 068 20 60 633 or visit the CAAHT web site: www.caaht.com.